

Interview with Charles Hartke
AIS-V-L-2008-068
Excerpt from Interview # 1: September 23, 2008
Interviewer: Mark DePue

COPYRIGHT

The following material can be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes without the written permission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. These materials are not to be deposited in other repositories, nor used for resale or commercial purposes without the authorization from the Audio-Visual Curator at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 112 N. 6th Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701. Telephone (217) 785-7955

Hartke: And, so they were, of course, drinking their mother's milk. And that was great, because you had to put them on solid feed eventually. And so I thought what we need is a feeder so that when they want to start eating, they all eat at the same time. It's long enough. So I built a feeder that was forty-two inches long and had places for eight pigs to stand there and eat. All right, now, the feed that you're starting them on is like a pabulum. It's a good tasting sweet feed with honey and whey and sugars and some corn and soybean meal and it's really—riboflavin. Really tastes good. I mean, I could eat a handful myself. You have these little pigs you want to start eating. But it would turn sour when it got wet or humidity and it's like taking your baby bottle you're feeding your baby and you're setting it on the kitchen table. You don't put it in the refrigerator and let it sit there all day, it's going to get sour. Well, this feed does, too, and so you have to develop a feeder that's not only big enough for them to all go to, but it's easy to clean out. And, so we developed a feeder that wouldn't rust, it was easy to clean out. It's called a flip and feed stainless steel. 50—304—403—304 stainless steel. Same thing forks and knives are made out of.

DePue: You mentioned 'we.'

Hartke: We. I had a partner by the name of Frank Brummer. He's a welder. And so I went to him with this concept and idea and we built one. We put one together. He was a welder, I was a farmer. So we started a company called Farmweld, Incorporated. Farmer and a welder. Farmweld, Incorporated, and we started trying to sell these Cadillac flip and feed stainless steel feeders. We sold about a hundred of them in the first three years at \$125 a piece and hogs were twelve dollars. Farmers just didn't have the money. They all needed to replace their feeders and knew it. Indestructible, stainless steel, wouldn't rust, wouldn't bend, hard, heavy, last a lifetime, but they were too high, and so as things evolved, I got another job all of a sudden in 1985.

DePue: Which we'll talk about in a bit.

Hartke: Yeah, and anyway, so I sold him my rights and everything to the thing, lock, stock, and barrel, for three grand.

DePue: Has he done okay with it since then?

Hartke: Sort of. He ran it for around twenty years, and within a year after I sold him those rights, he was selling a thousand a week and made a fortune. He's now sold to a Canadian company, the whole thing, lock, stock, and barrel, and I imagine he's worth a million or two.